



STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

WORLDWIDE THREAT ASSESSMENT OF THE US INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

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Environment and Climate Change

Global environmental and ecological degradation, as well as climate change, are likely to fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent through 2019 and beyond. Climate hazards such as extreme weather, higher temperatures, droughts, floods, wildfires, storms, sea level rise, soil degradation, and acidifying oceans are intensifying, threatening infrastructure, health, and water and food security. Irreversible damage to ecosystems and habitats will undermine the economic benefits they provide, worsened by air, soil, water, and marine pollution.

- Extreme weather events, many worsened by accelerating sea level rise, will particularly affect urban coastal areas in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. Damage to communication, energy, and transportation infrastructure could affect low-lying military bases, inflict economic costs, and cause human displacement and loss of life.
- Changes in the frequency and variability of heat waves, droughts, and floods—combined with poor governance practices—are increasing water and food insecurity around the world, increasing the risk of social unrest, migration, and interstate tension in countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Jordan.
- Diminishing Arctic sea ice may increase competition—particularly with Russia and China—over access to sea routes and natural resources. Nonetheless, Arctic states have maintained mostly positive cooperation in the region through the Arctic Council and other multilateral mechanisms, a trend we do not expect to change in the near term. Warmer temperatures and diminishing sea ice are reducing the high cost and risks of some commercial activities and are attracting new players to the resource-rich region. In 2018, the minimum sea ice extent in the Arctic was 25 percent below the 30-year average from 1980 to 2010.